Best Practice Carousel: Riisa Walden

**The Participation Box**

The following is a classroom management technique/device that I learned from one of my associate teachers and have used in both English and French classes. I would recommend its use with grade nine and ten classes as well as any other class where you may have reticent participators or a disengaged group of students. You may want to start a box with each class and then decide later which may benefit from its use.

**Materials Needed:**

1. A box
2. Paper

(I used recipe cards and a recipe card box. However, I have seen this done with full sheets of paper folded up and stored in a cookie tin.)

**Instructions:**

At the beginning of the year, as part of your introduction activities, have each student write his or her name on a piece of paper/recipe card. You may want to give the students some time to artistically personalize their card. I have had students write their names on one side of the card and then two things about themselves on the other. I then had them exchange cards with someone else in the class. That person would then also write something about the other student (make sure to state that they must be respectful).

Students then submit the cards to you, and you store them in the box. I do not explain the use of the box when we are creating the cards. I merely collect the cards, without showing students what I will be doing with them. In subsequent lessons you can use this box in the following ways:

1. randomly draw names of students when you would like someone to respond to a question
2. use the cards to select the order for presentations (It works well if you select the first card and then allow the student selected to pick the following card, and so forth.)
3. use the cards to randomly create student groupings of any size

**Observations:**

I do not use the box every lesson but bring it out when appropriate and when I would like to add a sense of playfulness to student participation. I have found that students enjoy when this box is being used. They respond to the transparency and randomness of the selection process. The possibility of any student being selected from the box seems to keep all students engaged and on their toes. The box is beneficial, because it allows you the opportunity to call on students who may be reticent to participate without them feeling as though you are personally singling them out. I also allows you, on occasion, to avoid having to deliberately ignore students who are always eager participators in an effort to involve all students in classroom learning.